

# COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

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The withdrawing of 300,000 quarters of barley from the distilleries, being one-sixteenth of the whole quantity grown in the country, will have a great effect in lowering the price of that article, and, in the event of a failure in his crop, how is the farmer to pay his rent and taxes?.....If barley is dear, it is owing to the shortness of the last year's crop; if it had been more plentiful, and, of course cheaper, it would have been much better for the farmer in every respect.....The proposed prohibition, by depreciating the price of barley, will, in fact, lay a partial tax upon the farmer."

SIR ROBERT BUXTON'S speech at the Norfolk meeting to petition against the intended Distillery bill.

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## SUMMARY OF POLITICS.

CORN AGAINST SUGAR (continued from page 686).—This I do think one of the most important questions that I have ever known agitated, not merely as it concerns the interests of the West Indian planter and the English farmer, but as it concerns the nation in general, as it affects its resources, the means of its strength and safety.—I do not recollect so early, and apparently so determined an opposition to any measure proposed to parliament, and what renders the question the more interesting is, that the opposition appears, at present, to have nothing to do with party.—I have now before me, 1st. the speeches of the Norfolk corn men made at a meeting, called by the Sheriff, and held at the Shire-house at Norwich, on Thursday, the 28th of April; 2d, the Petition of the corn men in the town and neighbourhood of Royston, in the counties of Cambridge and Hertford; 3d, a copy of the Report of the Committee of the House of Commons upon the subject; and, 4th, a copy of the minutes of the evidence, given before the said committee by Mr. ARTHUR YOUNG, secretary to the Board of Agriculture.—I shall insert these in the order in which they stand, offering to my readers, upon each of them, such observations as occur to me, and as I think likely to be of public utility.

I. The meeting in Norfolk is stated to have been composed of the "landed interest;" but, if nothing contrary to the general interest had been intended, if, as is professed by some, a concern for the safety of the nation had been the motive of opposition, why were not the freeholders in general convened? It will appear, however, from the whole tenor of the proceedings, that misguided self-interest was, at this meeting, at least, the prevailing motive. I take the report from the Norfolk Chronicle of the 30th of April.—"SIR ROBERT BUXTON then addressed the meeting; he said that the measure which

"had been recommended by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, to prohibit the use of grain in the distilleries would prove injurious to the agriculture of the country, and to this county in particular. Norfolk and Suffolk exported more barley than all the rest of England, and of course we were more deeply interested in the subject than any other part of the kingdom. When he considered the immense load of taxes that was laid upon the land, he thought it a little hard that any measure should now be recommended that would operate to reduce the price of this staple commodity; but he more particularly objected to the principle of laying any restrictions on agriculture at all; when he had the honour of a seat in Parliament, he had freely expressed his opinion against all legislative interference whatever with the agriculture of the country; and he had always thought, that had it not been for the Corn Laws, which operated as a restriction upon agriculture, we should not have been under the necessity of importing corn from foreign countries. Greater restrictions would prejudice the sale of barley—the farmers would grow less—the withdrawing of 300,000 quarters from the distilleries, one-16th of the quantity stated to be grown in England (4,800,000 quarters), would have a great effect in lowering the price of that article, and in the event of a failure in his crop, how was the farmer to pay his rent and taxes? It appeared from a pamphlet by an old friend of his (sir Wm Young), that at the commencement of the French revolution, and when France ceased to receive sugar from their revolted colony, St. Domingo, the planters in our own islands began to cultivate new lands, and to such an extent as enabled them to send immense quantities of sugar to England; which, with the produce of the conquered colonies, had glutted the market, and



" caused a great depreciation in the price of  
 " that commodity. But was it reasonable  
 " that the landed interest should be called  
 " upon to make good the speculations of the  
 " West India planters? Why was the agri-  
 " culture of the country to be made the sub-  
 " ject of experiment? If barley was dear,  
 " it was owing to the shortness of the last  
 " year's crop; if it had been more plenti-  
 " ful and of course cheaper, it would have  
 " been much better for the farmer in every  
 " respect. The proposed prohibition, by  
 " depreciating the price of barley, went in  
 " fact to lay a partial tax upon the farmer.  
 " —The measure in every point of view was  
 " the most injurious to the country that  
 " could possibly be conceived. He did not  
 " wish to mix politics with the ques-  
 " tion, but he had strong objections to  
 " the measure in a constitutional point of  
 " view: the discretionary power to be vest-  
 " ed in the privy council he thought highly  
 " unconstitutional; it was to the legislature,  
 " to their representatives, and not to a privy  
 " council, that the landed interest was to  
 " look up for redress. With these impres-  
 " sions he should move some resolutions ex-  
 " pressive of the sense of the country, and  
 " request the members to communicate to  
 " parliament the sentiments of their consti-  
 " tuents on this important subject. He  
 " felt the utmost pleasure in saying, that  
 " no member had paid more attention, or  
 " rendered greater services to the agricul-  
 " tural interests of the country, than an  
 " hon. gent. (Mr. Coke). The resolutions,  
 " which appear in another part of this  
 " paper, were then read and unanimously  
 " adopted; and a committee was appointed  
 " from the gentlemen present, to act as  
 " circumstances should require.—" MR.  
 " PLUMPTRE stated the motives which had  
 " induced him to sign the requisition;  
 " and then proceeded at considerable length  
 " to comment upon the Report of the  
 " Select Committee, (for copies of which  
 " the meeting were indebted to Mr. Wm.  
 " Smith, M. P. who, aware how deeply  
 " many of his constituents were interested  
 " in the subject, had re-published it in  
 " the form of a pamphlet). That report,  
 " Mr. P. said, contained some inconsis-  
 " tencies and omissions, which he doubted  
 " not would be hereafter explained. He  
 " thought that all legislative interference  
 " with agricultural produce, operated to  
 " the detriment of the country; if the  
 " measure was bottomed on an apprehen-  
 " sion of a scarcity, he should bow to the  
 " decision of the committee, but it would,  
 " in that case, be necessary to extend the

" prohibition to Ireland, which the com-  
 " mittee do not recommend. Mr. P. con-  
 " cluded by recommending to the attention  
 " of the gentlemen present, the New  
 " Encyclopædia, publishing in numbers,  
 " as containing a complete history of the  
 " Corn Laws.—MR. COKE said, as a lover  
 " of agriculture he could not but express  
 " his best thanks to the high sheriff, for  
 " convening this meeting, and to the  
 " worthy baronet, who moved the resolu-  
 " tions. He had not had the good fortune  
 " to agree with him at all times; but on  
 " the present occasion he joined most hear-  
 " tily with him, in condemning this inter-  
 " ference with the agriculture of the coun-  
 " try. In 1798, when a similar application  
 " was made by the West India merchants,  
 " Mr. Pitt, who conceived the substitution  
 " of sugar instead of malt in the distilleries  
 " would be injurious both to the revenue  
 " as well as to agriculture, set his face  
 " against it; and about two years ago,  
 " when the application was renewed, he  
 " (Mr. Coke) wrote to a cabinet minister  
 " to know his sentiments on the subject,  
 " and to assure him that he should call  
 " the attention of his county to it; and  
 " do every thing in his power to oppose it.  
 " —Mr. Fox returned for answer, 'you  
 " may keep your county quiet;' and so  
 " the application again fell to the ground.—  
 " He admitted the distresses of the plan-  
 " ters to be great, which were however  
 " in a great measure occasioned by their  
 " gambling speculations.—He could not  
 " admit that the present committee was  
 " fairly appointed; it was composed prin-  
 " cipally of West India planters and mer-  
 " chants; application was made to admit  
 " county members, but without success;  
 " and afterwards the members for the  
 " barley counties, but the chancellor of  
 " the exchequer would not hear of it.—  
 " With respect to the price of barley, had  
 " it not been for the failure of the pea  
 " crop, barley would not have been so  
 " dear. When he first knew Norfolk, all the  
 " western parts of the county grew nothing  
 " but rye; by superior husbandry it had  
 " become a wheat county, and he trusted  
 " that nothing would be done to discourage  
 " the growth of barley or to alter the re-  
 " gular system of Norfolk husbandry. It  
 " had been recommended to the farmers  
 " to use sugar and molasses for the fat-  
 " tening of cattle, but he did not think it  
 " would answer; if there was a prospect of  
 " it, he was certain that the intelligent  
 " men whom he had the honour of ad-  
 " dressing would have made the experiment

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Norfolk was the first barley county in the kingdom, and its yeomanry of the most respectable description, and they might be sure of his attention to their interests on all occasions. From a report which accidentally fell into his hands, it appeared that 90 years ago, five millions of people consumed more malt than nine millions do at this time, this he could not account for, but perhaps the brewers could; for John Bull was as fond of beer now as he was 90 years ago."—Suppose I begin our remarks with this last part of Coke's speech. It has nothing at all to do with the main question; but, it affords a good opportunity of questioning a popular opinion, which appears to me to be founded in error.—The report, of which Mr. Coke speaks, was, doubtless, the report of the evidence of Mr. Arthur Young, who stated, that, "by the return to the act of 11. Geo. III. it appears, that the number of the people in 1720, was 5,565,000, and that, in the period of that act, it was 3,343,578;" and yet, "that at the former period more malt was consumed than at the latter period."—Of the *utility* of this statement we shall, probably, have to speak bye-and-by; but, *where* did Mr. Young learn that the number was 5,565,000 in 1720? Not "by the return to the act;" at least, I never saw or heard of any return; and I thought that all the returns to that act were in my possession. Mr. Young may have heard of a census, or numbering of the people, in England and Wales, previous to the year 1801; but I never did, and, I am of opinion, that he never now spoken from no better authority than that of GREGORY KING, who, indeed, was so minute and accurate a gentleman, that he included in his estimate the number of rabbits in England and Wales.—When the returns were made to the House of Commons, Mr. Chalmers and others looked at Gregory's estimate, and triumphantly exclaimed, see how our population has increased! But, in viewing the strength of the kingdom as *relative* to that of the neighbouring nations (which was the object of Mr. Chalmers in particular), some attention should have been paid to what our old pains-taking friend Gregory said about the population of France, which, at the epoch of his estimate, he stated at 12,000,000; and now know, that, in the time of Necker, there were in France, 26,000,000 of people. That, supposing Gregory's estimate to have been correct, the population of France increased much more than the population of England, a fact which it never occur-

red to Mr. Chalmers to notice in his "estimate of the *relative* strength of Great Britain;" but, indeed, it was a fact that did by no means answer his purpose, which was to please Pitt, and one way of doing which was to persuade the nation that it was in a most thriving and flourishing state, while it was weighed down to the very earth with taxes, and had constantly in its bosom an immense army of tax-gatherers.—Now, as to the fact, my opinion is, that the population of England and Wales has *decreased* during the last hundred years. London has increased, but look at the distant counties; look at the hundreds of towns and villages, once considerable and now almost nothing; look at the large churches in places which now contain scarcely people enough to fill a large pew; but, above all, look at the ancient marks of the plough imprinted upon millions of acres of land which now bear scarcely a blade of grass. Let any man look at the sides of Old Winchester hill (near Warnford in this county;) let him look at the sides of the down near Twyford and Morestead, where the land, in order to enable the horses to go, was first mowed with the spade, and placed in the form of steps of a stair; let him proceed westward even to the land's end, observing the same all the way; and then let him say, what demand for food that must have been, which could have driven the cultivators of the land to such undertakings. All these lands are now uncultivated; and, I think, that this fact alone is quite sufficient to prove, that there is now less food required in the country than there formerly was; and, of course, that the population has diminished.—Returning from this digression, for which the reader must blame Mr. Coke, I come to that part of the speeches, which applies to the question before us. Upon what SIR ROBERT BUXTON said it will not be necessary to say much, seeing that the worthy Baronet was kind enough to answer himself, as will be perceived by the sentences which I have taken for my motto. In one breath he tells us, that lowering the price of barley will disable the farmer to pay his rent and taxes; in the next breath, that if barley were cheaper, it would be much better for the farmer in every respect; in the third breath, that, by depreciating the price of barley, you lay a partial tax upon the farmer. This was pretty well, I think, for one single speech; and, if the committee, which was, it appears, appointed by the meeting "to act as circumstances might require," should but discover sagacity equal to Sir Robert, their affairs are, it must be confessed,



in a most promising way.—MR. PLUMPTRE said *nothing*, and Mr. COKE seems to have spoken as an amateur rather than a practitioner. He took care, however, to say a great deal of himself, and seems to have been very anxious to cause it to be believed, that he is the main prop of the farming interest. “When,” says he, “about two years ago, an application to the effect of the present measure was made to the ministers, he wrote to Mr Fox to assure him that he should call the attention of his county to it, and do every thing in his power to oppose it; that Mr Fox returned for answer, *you may keep your county quiet*, and SO the application fell to the ground;” and SO, I trust it will not fall to the ground now; for, if the ministers are to be thus turned aside from doing what they are convinced is for the general good, there can be no term of reproach too severe to be bestowed upon them.—The distresses of the planters have, I allow, little to do with the question, which I confine merely to the general interests of England; but, what does Mr. Coke mean by asserting, that these distresses have arisen chiefly by the “*gambling speculations of the planters?*” The planters are no more gamblers, and, perhaps, not nearly so much, as the Norfolk farmers are. In the families of many of them their plantations have been for several generations; and their pursuits partake as little of the nature of gambling as do the pursuits of Mr Coke. There have, of late years, been speculations enough in farming, speculations, too, bordering upon gambling; and yet Mr. Coke would not like to hear the accusation applied to himself and “*his county.*”

II. The following is a copy of the Petition to parliament from “*the Owners and occupiers of land, resident in the town and neighbourhood of Royston.*”—“That your petitioners are many of them owners, but the greater part of them occupiers of lands, in a district where barley is the principal article of produce, and where, from the great proportion of arable land, it is presumed more barley is cultivated yearly than in almost any other district of equal extent in this country.—That your petitioners find it extremely difficult, by their most laborious exertions, to obtain a remuneration, even in kindly seasons, proportionate to their labour, owing to the increased expense of every article necessary to husbandry, and the oppressive weight of rates and taxes, to which they are liable. That they have at all times cheerfully borne the full share of public burthens, in the hope that they

would have been enabled to procure a fair and reasonable profit from the produce of their land. But they have lately been very sensibly alarmed at the measure which they understand has been recommended by a committee of your honourable house, to whom it was referred to consider of the expediency of prohibiting the use of barley, malt, and other grain in the distilleries of British spirits, and of substituting sugar and molasses in their stead; a circumstance which cannot fail, as your petitioners most humbly insist, to depreciate in a very considerable degree those essential articles of subsistence, the growth of our own country, in favour of others (useful, indeed, in their nature, but of considerably less consequence) the produce of our own distant colonies; and your petitioners beg leave humbly to represent to this hon. house, that the depression of our own produce, for the benefit of our distant colonies, appears to your petitioners both impolitic and unjust. That such a plan, if adopted by the legislature of the country, and passed into a law, must be highly detrimental to the farmer, and throw a damp on the increasing spirit of agriculture (in the perfection of which the permanent security of the kingdom will be found to exist) at a time the most dangerous for such an experiment to be made; and that the landed interest, upon which the greatest proportion of the present taxes are thrown, will be still more depressed, and, of consequence, lose that equal weight in the scale of the country to which at least it is entitled.—Your petitioners beg to urge to your hon. house as an unquestionable fact, that the growth of grain in this country must be proportionably diminished, by lessening the demand for it, whilst every extension of the market, will encourage and increase the growth, and thereby improve our internal resources, and lessen our dependence upon other countries: and that the present growth of grain has of late years been much increased, and is capable, by impartial legislative protection, of being rendered equal to the supply of every domestic market that can be opened to it.—That a great proportion of your petitioners’ lands lie in a common field state, subject to the rights of sheepwalk, and to invariable rotations of cropping, and the depreciation of the value of their improved crop will therefore be more deeply injurious to them; and that, from the comparative poverty of the soil of a large part of this district, the crops are obtained by a

greater expense, than the mode of husbandry in the parts: you necessarily pressed by the crop. — think it in time most house, to ease into y will not pe so injurious landed into to pass into ford them to your v meet.” — tion, if w te than th and Mr w, which the land- ke as if d. Alm tainly do ut, are the of the e tax upon consumer? England, t illings du money; bu the du erseer of the tax, b ern, pay th use with there the age; for, tuitly, pa come of come, and pend ent ry precar tinton h ounds a y ouse, he adesman his trac me tax. rpetuity ell or si m; wh a mom alties, a 4 year orth 30 ch a sta specially ould th ke, ab



greater exertion, and a more expensive mode of farming, than in many other parts: your petitioners must, therefore, necessarily be more proportionably depressed by a decrease of the value of the crop. — Your petitioners, therefore, think it incumbent on them to lose no time most humbly to implore your hon. house, to take the circumstances of their case into your consideration, and that you will not permit a restriction, in its nature so injurious to your petitioners, and to the landed interest of the country in general, to pass into a law; and that you will afford them such relief in the premiums, as to your wisdom and justice shall seem meet." — There is nothing *new* in this position, if we suppose it to have been of later date than the speeches of Sir Robert Buxton and Mr. Coke, otherwise that part is new, which speaks of the *heavy taxes* borne by the land-owners and farmers. Sir Robert spoke as if almost all the taxes fell upon the land. Almost the whole of the *poor-rates* certainly do fall *immediately* upon the land; but, are they not *finally* paid by the consumer of the corn, after the same manner that the tax upon sugar and rum is paid by the consumer? A gallon of rum is brought into England, the importer pays, perhaps, ten shillings duty and five shillings in purchase money; but, if he sell it to me, do I not pay the duty? The corn is taxed by the overseer of the poor; the farmer pays him the tax, but do not I, who consume the corn, pay the tax in the end? — It is otherwise with the income, or property, tax. Here the land owner has a decided advantage; for, his income, which he has *in perpetuity*, pays no higher rate of tax than the income of a carpenter or smith, whose income, and the existence of whose family, depend entirely upon his life, nay upon that very precarious thing, his *health*. Sir Robert Buxton has, we will say, five thousand pounds a year, derived from land; and, of course, he pays £500 a year income tax. A tradesman gains five thousand pounds a year by his trade, and he pays £500 a year income tax. But, Sir Robert's land is held in perpetuity; it is productive whether he be well or sick, and it descends to his heir after him; while the tradesman's gains may cease at a moment, are subject to a hundred casualties, and are, in fact, not worth above 3 or 4 years purchase, while Sir Robert's are worth 30 years purchase at the very least. In such a state of things the land owners, and especially the *great* land-owners, might, one would think, were it merely for decency's sake, abstain from complaining about the

partiality of taxation. — These petitioners state, that, "even in *kindly* seasons, they "can hardly obtain a sufficient remuneration for their labour, owing to the high "price of every article necessary to husbandry, and the oppressive weight of "rates and taxes." — What do they mean by "*kindly* seasons?" Do they mean plentiful years? Why, in plentiful years corn is *cheap*, and that, according to their apparent view of the matter, is a great injury to them, they being, in fact, petitioners for a *high price*! And, as to articles necessary to husbandry, the principal of which is *labour*, does it not, gentlemen, bear (taken together with the poor-rates) an exact proportion to the price of your corn? Do not *rents* also preserve this proportion, upon an average of years; and *must* not this be the case? Is it not so in the nature of things? And, upon any other supposition, would there not be some sense in the standing toast of the farmers: "Cheap land and dear corn?" — Mr. Young, too, talks, as we shall see by-and-by, about rates and taxes and expensive utensils and the many other *discouragements* to agriculture; but, when, a few weeks ago, Mr. Young was writing to me with a view to obtain a general enclosure bill, he agreed with Mr. Spence, that *there were more farmers than farms*, and that capital was every day more and more pressing forward to be employed in agriculture. The fact is so. It is notorious, that, if there be a farm to let, the owner is instantly beset with applicants for it. Is this a proof that farming yields little profit? Does this corroborate the idea of Mr. Wakefield (whom, by the bye, I should have been glad to hear from again), that "the farmer is *not* sufficiently rewarded for his labour and the use of his capital?"

III. The Report of the Committee of the House of Commons, recommending the use of Sugar instead of Corn, in the Distilleries, is very long; but, it will be sufficient for all the purposes of the discussion to insert the concluding part of it, which contains the result of their inquiries. — "It appears to "your committee, that considerable quantities of wheat, flour, and oats, have been "annually imported into Great Britain for "some years past, while the export of those "articles has been very trifling. The annual import and export of barley is very "small. This furnishes a sufficient proof "that we have of late years depended, in "some degree, upon our foreign connections for a supply of food for the inhabitants of this country, and your committee "are not informed of any circumstances at-



"tendant on the late crop that can diminish  
 "the importance of that resource.—Your  
 "committee taking into their most serious  
 "consideration the state of our foreign re-  
 "lations, and the consequent probability  
 "that our usual supply of grain from fo-  
 "reign countries may fail us, are naturally  
 "led to suggest measures of precaution  
 "which may eventually ward off so great  
 "an evil.—It appears that about 470,000  
 "qrs. of grain are annually consumed by  
 "the British distillers, and a greater quanti-  
 "ty in Ireland, and that the importation of  
 "corn into G. Britain from foreign parts,  
 "exclusive of that from Ireland, has for 5  
 "years past amounted to about 770,000 qrs.  
 "Under the pressure of an actual scarcity,  
 "there would be no hesitation in having  
 "recourse to a stoppage of the distilleries.  
 "Your committee therefore submit, that  
 "the restriction of that trade to the use of  
 "sugar for a limited time in G. Britain  
 "only, (if the measure should be deemed  
 "inadmissible as to Ireland) would be a  
 "wise measure of precaution under our  
 "present prospects. It would leave for the  
 "food of the people 470,000 qrs. of grain,  
 "a quantity greater than the importation of  
 "oats in the last year.—Aware however,  
 "that should any change of circumstances  
 "open our communication with the rest of  
 "the world, this measure might be render-  
 "ed unnecessary in the view just stated—  
 "aware that although in the event of a de-  
 "ficient crop this year, the distress would  
 "be greatly increased if accompanied by a  
 "deficiency in our usual foreign supplies;  
 "yet, that in the event of a superabundant  
 "harvest, the proposed restriction might be  
 "found very hurtful to the agricultural in-  
 "terests of the kingdom—aware that the  
 "return of peace might relieve the West  
 "India planters from their present distress,  
 "and that probably some measures may be  
 "devised which may alleviate that distress  
 "before the period to which it is proposed  
 "to limit this suspension shall be con-  
 "cluded, your committee recommend in  
 "the strongest manner, that any bill to be  
 "brought in, in consequence of this Report,  
 "should contain a clause granting a power  
 "to the king in council, upon a sufficient  
 "notice, to do away the suspension, and  
 "allow the distillers to carry on their trade  
 "in the accustomed manner.—When it  
 "is considered how very small a portion of  
 "the barley grown in this kingdom is con-  
 "sumed by the distillers, it is scarcely pos-  
 "sible to think that the proposed measure  
 "itself can bear very hard upon the grow-  
 "er. It is calculated that 1,200,000 acres

"are used for that purpose, of which about  
 "80,000, or one-sixteenth, are sufficient to  
 "grow the whole quantity from which the  
 "spirits consumed in England are produced.  
 "The quantity of barley and bere grown in  
 "Scotland does not, in all probability, bear  
 "a much less proportion to that consumed  
 "in a similar manner. There are doubt-  
 "less many parts of the country in which  
 "the substitution of a different crop could  
 "be attended with no disadvantage, and  
 "might eventually be attended with profit.  
 "In the most cultivated parts of Scotland,  
 "in which a practical knowledge of agricul-  
 "ture exists in as great perfection as any-  
 "where, such a substitution has been found  
 "actually to answer.—It is to be remark-  
 "ed, that although it may be deemed dis-  
 "advantageous to substitute any other  
 "grain in the room of barley, yet that the  
 "prices of grain mutually operate upon  
 "each other, and that a rise or fall in the  
 "price of any one kind must have a corre-  
 "sponding influence on the prices of the  
 "rest; and that any alarm which might be  
 "created by this measure can only operate  
 "prospectively as to next year's crop, from  
 "an expectation that the same suspension  
 "will again be resorted to.—Your com-  
 "mittee trust, that on a full consideration  
 "of the subject, all apprehension will be  
 "done away by the power proposed to be  
 "vested in the king and council. They are  
 "sensible that they should not have fulfilled  
 "the duties imposed on them by the house,  
 "unless they proceed to consider every pos-  
 "sible mode of relief for the proprietors of  
 "West India estates; and they trust that  
 "they shall be enabled to suggest measures  
 "so permanently beneficial to that body, as  
 "to render it unnecessary for them again to  
 "apply for the interference of parliament,  
 "even should the present anomalous state  
 "of our foreign relations be protracted.—  
 "Your committee are persuaded that the  
 "permanent adoption of this measure would  
 "be attended with great evils to the agricul-  
 "ture of the country; they feel it incum-  
 "bent on them to state, that nothing in the  
 "evidence before them could induce a re-  
 "commendation to that effect; they con-  
 "ceive that its frequent repetition would be  
 "still more hurtful; and nothing but the  
 "strong case so clearly made out by the  
 "West India interest, coupled with the loss  
 "of our trade with the countries from  
 "whence we derived a great proportion of  
 "our foreign supply, could prevail upon  
 "them to advise even this slight temporary  
 "interference (guarded as it is by the pro-  
 "posed limitations) with an established

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system of agriculture.—The peculiar situation of Ireland, the great difficulty of collecting the revenue on spirits there, the great prevalence of illegal distillation, and the fear that this measure, together with the popular preference for corn whiskey, might increase that trade to an unlimited amount, and interfere with any regulations that might be adopted for its suppression, prevent your committee from decidedly recommending the extension of this suspension to that country; but they are by no means prepared to assert that such regulations may not possibly be devised as to render its adoption there as practicable as in Great Britain. They are unwilling to express an opinion on this part of the question.—Your committee press upon the consideration of the house the severe loss that must be felt by the empire at large, and by no part of it more than by the landed interest, if some efficient remedy should not save the West India colonies from the disasters that await them.—When it is recollected that this country derives from them a net revenue on sugar of £3,000,000 annually, besides the duties on the other articles of their produce; that they take off manufactures and produce of this country to the amount of £6,000,000 sterling, to which considerations must be added the shipping they employ, and the sailors bred in the trade; and that were the restriction taken off that now impedes the export of corn to the colonies, they would import from hence, to the great advantage of the British landholder and merchant, a considerable proportion of what they now do from foreign parts; it is hoped that the house will think your committee warranted, under the peculiar circumstances of the times, in recommending the suspension of the use of grain in the distilleries of G. Britain, and their restriction to the use of sugar for one year, from the 1st of July, 1808, to the 1st of July, 1809, accompanied by the aforesaid discretionary power to be vested in his majesty.—Mr. Coke complains of the composition of the committee, and says, that the *country gentlemen* (I thought, for my part, the race had been extinct) were excluded from it, though it appears from the members present upon the 25th of March, that, out of 14 members, there were Sir Henry Mildmay, Mr. Lascelles, and Mr. Western. Whether there were any more great land-owners I do not know; for I know not the persons of most of the rest of the members present; but, I think, it is

quite clear, from this report, that the influence of what Mr. Coke calls the landed interest did sufficiently prevail. Would to God that as great care were taken of the general interests of the nation, in many other cases that I could point out!

IV. The Evidence of MR. ARTHUR YOUNG, Secretary to the Board of Agriculture, as it appears to have been the grand war-horse of the corn men, is worthy of particular attention. He was examined by the committee on the 21st, the 24th, and 25th of March. The minutes of the examination are too long to be inserted here entire; but, by leaving out those parts, which relate to the manner of cultivating land, to the particular interests of certain persons and districts, and to other matters of mere detail, we shall find room for all that has connection with the great points under discussion.

—But, before I proceed to quote, I must beg the reader to bear in mind, that he has been addressed by Mr. Young through the pages of some recent numbers of my Register. His letters will be found in the present volume, at pages 288, 375, 568; and a few words will suffice for their history. I had, in several previous numbers, contended, that England was capable of maintaining herself independent of all foreign commerce. Mr. Young, in his first letter, endeavoured to convince me of the contrary, and referred to his experience to prove, that, without foreign commerce, even our agriculture could not flourish. In the same letter he noticed an assertion of mine, that, in years of the greatest known scarcity, we had not imported more than enough provisions for one week; and he entered into a very minute account of our imports of grain, with the view of convincing me, that we did, in a great measure, depend upon foreign commerce for an adequate supply of food. In his second letter (page 375) he took occasion to point out the remedy; that is to say, an addition to be made to the food of the country by the enclosing of the waste lands, under the operation of a general enclosure bill. In answer to this letter, I stated (see p. 365) several objections to a measure of this sort, and asked, besides, what good it would do, seeing that “the friends of agriculture” complained corn was already *too cheap*? Mr. Young, at page 568, made an attempt to answer this question: how far he succeeded the reader has seen; but, at any rate, he still persisted, that our prospects of future supply were very gloomy, and that the only effectual remedy lay in a measure of general enclosure. It must be obvious to every one, that such a measure, if adopted, would be



slow in its operation. My opinion is, that it would *never* have the proposed effect, and I need give no other reasons than those stated in the article above referred to, and which Mr. Young has not, in my opinion, refuted, or shaken in the smallest degree. But, be this as it may, there can be no doubt upon this point, that, to obtain an additional supply of food from lands now lying waste must be a *work of time*, to say nothing about the seed required for them, and the labour which must be *withdrawn* from the lands already enclosed and under cultivation. Nevertheless, let this be conceded too. Let the supposition be adopted, that this seed and this labour, so withdrawn, would leave the other lands just as they were, and even suppose, that, in the ensuing year, the new enclosures would give us an addition to our food; let us suppose all this, still the fact is, that there is no such measure of general enclosure. We are not, at the present moment, to trouble ourselves with what *might*, what *may*, or what *will* be; but, we all know, that there is no general enclosure bill; that there is no such thing as that which Mr. Young insisted was our *only* resource against the dangers, nay the horrors, of a non-importation of food. Well, then, who would not have expected to find Mr. Young amongst the most strenuous of the advocates for an importation of corn in the form of sugar? Who would not have expected to hear him, who was so alarmed at the stoppage of the importation of 800,000 quarters of corn annually, congratulate me and my readers, that the ministers had found out a way of saving the consumption of 300,000 quarters annually, by causing sugar to be used in the distilleries? "Ministers," says he (p. 377), "best know where corn is to be had; to me it seems just as probable to procure it from the Moon as from Prussia or Poland. Were a short crop, or a week's mildew, to arrive, we should see the two houses called together; committees appointed; examinations, proceedings, proclamations issued; harangues pronounced; substitutes recommended; the volunteers in activity; government alarmed, and Buonaparte delighted." Well, Sir, the ministers have found corn, and that, too, without going to the Moon; and, are you not pleased at the lucky discovery? Not at all, it seems; and you now dread, not "a short crop or a week's mildew," but a *glutted market*! And still; aye, still you cry for *more corn*, through the means of a general enclosure bill! This really is enough to addle one's brain. In Sir Robert Buxton or any of the amateurs, who assem-

ble to *drink* success to agriculture, such palpable inconsistency might be turned off with a laugh; but it is painful to see a gentleman of great and acknowledged talents, and of experience, as to such matters, surpassing that of, perhaps, any other man living, thus hampered by the influence of a more than sectarian bigotry to one particular pursuit.—Let us now proceed to the extracts from the minutes, beginning with the examination of the 21st of March.—

"Q. What, in your opinion, would be the effects upon the agriculture of the country of the prohibition to use the usual sorts of grain in the distilleries of Great Britain and Ireland? A. I conceive, that the effect would be injurious to the agriculture of the kingdom, exactly in proportion to the quantity removed from demand in the market.—Q. Is that quantity so considerable as to make the barley grower look to the distillery as a source of considerable influence on the price of the article? A. Undoubtedly, no report could spread through the kingdom, relative to any stoppage in the distillery, which would not *immediately sink the price of barley* in my apprehension.—Q. You have stated, in your first answer, that the exclusion of grain from the distilleries, would be injurious to the agriculture of the country: do you mean that it would be so under the limitation of one year, or do you connect with that limitation a continued exclusion afterwards? A. The stoppage of the distillery for one year, next October, I conceive, would affect the quantity of barley sown the following spring; relative to any after effect, it would depend upon the circumstances I alluded to before.—

"Q. You have stated, that the report of such exclusion being spread about the country, would be injurious to the agriculture of the country? A. Merely by sinking the price.—Q. Has such report circulated already? A. I really do not know. I have been in town ever since this committee sat, or was expected to sit.—Q. Has the price fallen? A. No, not that I know of.—Q. Is there any reason to expect it will immediately fall? A. I stated the crop to be a short one, and consequently *there is little likelihood of the price falling with a short crop*, speaking only at the present time, and so late in the season as the month of March.

—There needs no comment upon this. The answers do, in fact, answer themselves. It is strange, though, that Mr. Young, who holds constant correspondence with every

part of the superintend agricultural formation a because h he was ask fall, he se the danger vent. Th barley the in another the price then, again enclosures be raised scarcity! —" Q. S " corn in " justly " quarter " marke " the an " the di " ceive " totally " the ki " sed by " quart " medic " from " 300,0 " quan " evil Young demand the spe This ha cannot The m omitted was, a his let point, lieved, now s unable Is it n declar quarte an ei him s its w in an sures " ev " 30 " ev " A " th " E " q



part of the country, and who, I believe, superintends the publishing of a monthly agricultural report, should have wanted information as to this important fact, merely because he had been *in town*. But, when he was asked, if the price was *expected* to fall, he seems to have been fully aware of the danger of being a prophet *before the event*. There was, last year, a short crop of barley then, it seems, and yet Mr. Young, in another part of his evidence, says that the price of barley is now too low; and then, again, he says that he wants new enclosures, in order that *more corn* might be raised, to prepare us against a day of scarcity!—The examination goes on:—  
 “Q. Supposing the average quantity of corn imported into this country can be justly computed at more than 800,000 quarters, what injury then, arises to the market, by a decrease in the demand to the amount of 300,000 quarters used in the distilleries at the time when we conceive the importation is nearly, if not totally stopped? A. The agriculture of the kingdom having been greatly depressed by the regular importation of 800,000 quarters, it would seem of all other remedies the most extraordinary, to take from the demand, such as it is, that of 300,000 quarters, or any other given quantity. It seems to be an addition of *one evil* to another.”—Here we see Mr. Young alarmed at a new evil. A *diminished demand*, not a diminished supply, is now the spectre that haunts his imagination. This has been observed on before, but, it cannot be too often presented to the reader. The motto to my last sheet (in which I omitted to put the name of Mr. Young) was, as will be seen, extracted from one of his letters. His letters all tended to one point, namely, that of causing it to be believed, that England, as her agriculture now stands, is, upon an average of years, unable to provide for her own subsistence. Is it not monstrous then, to hear him now declare, that the introduction of 300,000 quarters of corn, in the shape of sugar, is *an evil*? But, we are now going to hear him say, that the country can provide for its wants, not only without any importation in any shape, but without any new enclosures.—“Q. Do you suppose, that the evil of the decrease of the demand of 300,000 quarters, can be equal to the evil of the import of 800,000 quarters? A. Certainly not.—Q. Do you suppose that all the land in cultivation throughout England, would be able to supply that quantity? A. CERTAINLY, without

the hesitation of a moment.—Q. Without breaking up pasture? A. It would be a very great benefit to break up pasture. A great deal of bad pasture remains so, for want of encouragement to plough it, and if that enormous import was cut off, all such bad pastures would immediately be under the plough.—Q. What would be the consequence of it to the grazing of the country? A. The grazing of the country does not depend upon bad pastures, but upon good, and landlords would certainly take care that good grass should be supplied.—Q. Would not the diminution of the quantity of pasture land, raise the price of butcher's meat, butter, and cheese? A. It would lessen the price; for there can be no question at all, but that the clover and turnips upon such pastures, so broken up, would produce much more of those articles, than the whole pasture did before.—Q. Would this expedient avail much, supposing the foreign supply of G. Britain suddenly cut off? A. If such change occurred in the month of June, it certainly could have no effect till the season of putting crops in return again.—Q. You have stated, that a great deal of pasture remains unploughed, because it is not worth while to plough it: could it be profitably brought into a course of corn crops unless there were a considerable increase in the price of corn? A. Undoubtedly not, or the expectation of a better price.”—Now, he first states, that our average importation has been 800,000 quarters of corn; this quantity, together with what we grew, he says was necessary to us, and he adds that he knows not where the ministers are to find it. But, say the committee, do you suppose, that our lands already enclosed and under cultivation, would be able to supply the quantity of corn which we have been accustomed to import? “*Certainly*,” says he, “without the hesitation of a moment.” It follows, then, I think, that Mr. Spence and I were right, when we asserted (what Mr. Young contradicted) that we could exist independent of commerce, and that there was no necessity for that general enclosure bill, which he represented as the only preventive of the horrors of starvation. “Aye,” will he say, “but not too fast. I say the lands in cultivation are able to supply us; but, I mean under another mode of cultivation than the present.” Why, so I said, Mr. Young, when I objected to the project of a general enclosure bill; and you, at the close of a passage, in which you give your reasons







the corn-ports were to continue shut for 12 or 18 months longer, the price *might* rise to a distressing degree, but that much would depend upon the crop; nay, he is candid enough to admit, that, if the crop were an average one, inconvenience *might* arise, and well he might make this admission, after having, with all his great powers of statement, imprinted upon our minds the fact, that, upon an average of many years, we imported 800,000 quarters! But, is it not charming to see how calm, how composed, how serene, Mr. Young is become upon the score of a probable want of corn? I congratulate him upon the change, which will also, I hope, help to keep me in countenance; for, one of my correspondents treated me almost as an unfeeling ruffian, because I seemed to write upon the subject in cold blood. He told me *every body else* was alarmed, and he particularly cited Mr. Arthur Young, from whose authority, he said, there was no appeal.—We now come to the grand point respecting the effect, which a *general enclosure* would have upon the market, and the *difference* between that effect and the effect of the substitution of sugar for corn, in the distilleries. The committee seem here to have made their last grasp at the eel, and, I think, the reader will agree with me, that, with the help of my little sharp-pointed holders, they fairly caught him.

—Q Does a letter on the produce and consumption of this country signed “ARTHUR YOUNG,” and published in COBBETT’S REGISTER of the 5th of March, contain your sentiments on that subject? A. It does.—Q. I there read, “that there is a degree of precariousness in the national resources that ought to make a deep impression on the minds of those in whose hands the safety of the kingdom is placed, to find that our consumption of wheat in a year of moderate plenty exceeds the produce by more than £1,000,000, accompanied as it is by a population admitted on all hands to be increasing, must, surely, be admitted as a just cause of apprehension. Were the countries which have usually supplied us in a state of independence and security, the prospect would be far more pleasing, but when we cast an anxious eye to the ports of the Baltic, the view becomes dreary indeed.”—Was that case written under apprehensions of an *over loaded market*, or of a *famished population*? A. A *famished population* is a very strong term, but certainly it was written under apprehensions that a severe scarcity *might* en-

sue.—Q. Do you consider that the present state of the country, and doubtful reliance that is to be put in foreign markets, calls for a prompt adoption of the remedy against scarcity which you have proposed, viz. the encouragement of potatoes, and the cultivation of the waste lands? A. I certainly do, and I think that every hour that is lost, is much to be regretted.—Q. You have stated, that the exclusion of grain from the distillery, would injure agriculture by *lowering the price* of grain. Do you mean, that this effect would be produced, by the *additional quantity* that would be thus thrown on the market? A. Not by the additional quantity thrown on the market, but by the *demand* for the quantity already in market being *withdrawn*.—Q. Do you mean, that the proportion of demand would thereby become less than the proportion of supply? A. Certainly, as far as the quantity amounts to that is consumed by the distillery.—Q. Would not *the same effect* upon this proportion be occasioned, if; (the consumption remaining the same) an *additional supply of equal amount were to be brought into the market*? A. Certainly, I conceive it would.—Q. In *what respect*, then, will the effect on the market, which is produced by *saving* the consumption of a given quantity of corn, differ from that which is produced by introducing into the market an equal quantity *in addition* to the former supply by cultivating the waste lands? A. The culture of the waste lands would not have a great effect on the immediate production of BARLEY. The great effect would be, on the potatoes, and on the food of cattle and on the production of other grain, but probably least of all on barley. If the culture was principally to increase the production of barley, it would operate *exactly in the manner the hon. member alludes to*, saving the consumption of the people employed on such cultivation.—Q. Would the consumption of grain by the people of England be immediately *extended* by the cultivation of the waste lands? A. *Certainly not*.—Now, observe, the consumption, he says, of the people of England would *not be extended* by the cultivation of the waste lands. He had told me this before, and he saw the Register in the examiner’s hand. Well; 1st he says, the mouths would not be increased by the cultivation of the waste lands; 2d, that the quantity of corn produced would, by that cultivation, be increased; 3d, that the demand would be



diminished, and the price reduced of course, by the exclusion of corn from the distilleries; 4th, that the same effect would be produced if an additional supply of corn were brought into the market. These four propositions Mr. Young has here, in his answers, clearly and undeniably stated or assented to; and, these propositions admitted, it inevitably follows, that, if to introduce sugar into the distilleries be injurious to agriculture and the landed interest, and tends to rob the nation of a granary in times of dearth, so is the enclosure of waste lands injurious to agriculture and the landed interest, and tends to rob the nation of a granary in times of dearth. And, how does Mr. Young endeavour to escape from this inference; from this logical eel-holder? He is asked, "in *what respect*, then, does the effect "of the culture of waste lands differ "from that of the introduction of sugar "to supply the place of corn?" What is his answer to this question? Why, that "the culture of waste lands would "not have a *great* effect in the *immediate* "introduction of BARLEY." Of *barley*, Sir! Why, we were not talking of barley alone; nor were you talking of barley alone, when you were describing the probable horrid effects of a scarcity, and calling upon us to cultivate the waste lands, in order to prevent those effects. But, to leave no room for cavil, to do away all pretence for continuing the dispute upon this point, either you were, in your letters to me, talking of barley alone, or you were not. If you were not, then the above inference remains indisputable; and, if you were talking of barley alone, then we want no inference at all, for we have your own express acknowledgement, in your last answer but one, in these words: "If "the culture of the waste lands was *principally* "to increase the production of barley, "it would operate exactly in the manner "the honourable gentleman alludes to;" that is to say, it would produce the *same* effect as the introduction of sugar into the distilleries; and, that is to say, according to your present opinion, the culture of the waste lands would be injurious to agriculture and the landed interest, and would tend to rob the nation of a granary in times of dearth; which opinion is directly opposed, to all that, upon this matter, you have heretofore given as the result of your maturest thoughts, and have endeavoured to inculcate in the minds of all descriptions of persons.—I have now to beg the reader's pardon for having so long trespassed upon

his patience; but, the subject appeared to me to be of extreme importance to the nation at large; and, as Mr. Young is evidently the oracle of the country gentlemen, and of all the patrons of high prices of corn, it seemed to me necessary to show, that, either he is a gentleman of very unsettled opinions, or is carried away by a misguided zeal for the interest of that particular class of the community amongst whom he has had the greatest intercourse, and with whom he has long been an object of admiration and respect.—As to the measure proposed, there, surely, cannot be a doubt of its receiving the sanction of parliament. *Petitioners* indeed! *Petitioners* for a high price of corn! The freeholders of Rosshire have, it seems, petitioned for high prices, while it is *in evidence*, that an alarming scarcity exists in that county; and which state of things is not confined to Rosshire alone; yet, are the other counties of Scotland also petitioners against sugar, thanks to the instigation of those who would starve the people, if they could thereby fill their own pockets. But, is the sober and sensible part of the kingdom to *sit quietly*, and suffer, as a correspondent asks, a question of this extreme magnitude to be decided by the clamours of misguided avarice? If so, we deserve, not only to be *flogged*; but famine ought to complete what the lash has begun.

*Boileau, May 6.*

A LETTER FROM THE HON. TIMOTHY PICKERING, A SENATOR OF THE UNITED STATES FROM THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS, AND SECRETARY OF STATE UNDER GEN. WASHINGTON, EXHIBITING TO HIS CONSTITUENTS A VIEW OF THE IMMINENT DANGER OF AN UNNECESSARY AND RUINOUS WAR WITH GREAT BRITAIN: ADDRESSED TO HIS EXCELLENCY JAMES SULLIVAN, GOVERNOR OF THE SAID STATE.—*Dated City of Washington, Feb. 16, 1808.*

SIR;—In the even current of ordinary times, an address from a senator in congress to his constituents might be dispensed with. In such times, the proceedings of the executive and legislature of the United States, exhibited in their public acts, might be sufficient. But the present singular condition of our country, when its most interesting concerns, wrapt up in mystery, excite universal alarm, requires me to be no longer silent. Perhaps I am liable to censure, at such a crisis, for not sooner presenting, to you and them, such a view of our national affairs as my official situation has placed in my power. I now address it to you, Sir, as



the proper organ of communication to the legislature.—The attainment of truth is ever desirable: and I cannot permit myself to doubt that the statement I now make must be acceptable to all who have an agency in directing the affairs, and who are guardians of the interests of our commonwealth, which so materially depend on the measures of the government of the nation. At the same time, I am aware of the jealousy, with which, in these unhappy days of party dissensions, my communications may, by some of my constituents, be received. Of this I will not complain: while I earnestly wish the same jealousy to be extended towards all public men. Yet I may claim some share of attention and credit—that share which is due to the man who defies the world to point, in the whole course of a long and public life, at one instance of deception, at a single departure from truth.—The embargo demands the first notice. For perhaps no act of the national government has ever produced so much solicitude, or spread such universal alarm. Because all naturally conclude, that a measure pregnant with incalculable mischief to all classes of our fellow-citizens, would not have been proposed by the president, and adopted by congress, but for causes deeply affecting the interests and safety of the nation. It must have been under the influence of this opinion that the legislative bodies of some states have expressed their approbation of the embargo, either explicitly or by implication.—The following were all the papers laid by the president before congress, as the grounds of the embargo.—1. The proclamation of the king of G. Britain requiring the return of his subjects, the seamen especially, from foreign countries, to aid, in this hour of peculiar danger, in the defence of their own. But it being an acknowledged principle that every nation has a right to the service of its subjects in time of war, that proclamation could not furnish the slightest ground for an embargo.—2. The extract of a letter from the grand judge Regnier to the French attorney general for the council of prizes. This contained a partial interpretation of the imperial blockading decree of Nov. 21, 1806. This decree, indeed, and its interpretation, present flagrant violations of our neutral rights, and of the existing treaty between the United States and France; but still, the execution of that decree could not (from the small number of French cruisers) extensively interrupt our trade. These two papers were public.—3. The letter from our minister, Mr. Armstrong, to Mr. Champagny, the French minister of foreign affairs: and—4. Mr. Cham-

pagny's answer. Both these ought, in form or substance, also to have been made public. The latter would have furnished to our nation some idea of the views and expectations of France. But both were withdrawn by the president, to be deposited among other executive secrets: while neither presented any new ground to justify an embargo.—In the senate, these papers were referred to a committee. The committee quickly reported a bill for laying an embargo, agreeably to the president's proposal. This was read a 1st, a 2d, and a 3d time, and passed; and all in the short compass of about 4 hours! A little time was repeatedly asked, to obtain further information, and to consider a measure of such moment, of such universal concern: but these requests were denied. We were hurried into the passage of the bill, as if there was danger of its being rejected, if we were allowed time to obtain further information, and deliberately consider the subject. For to that time our vessels were freely sailing on foreign voyages; and in a national point of view, the departure of half a dozen or a dozen more, while we were inquiring into the necessity or expediency of the embargo, was of little moment. Or if the danger to our vessels, seamen, and merchandize, had been so extreme as not to admit of one day's delay, ought not that extreme danger to have been exhibited to congress? The constitution which requires the president "to give to congress information of the state of the union," certainly meant not partial, but complete information on the subject of a communication, so far as he possessed it. And when it enjoins him "to recommend to their consideration such measures as he should judge necessary and expedient," it as certainly intended that those recommendations should be bottomed on information communicated, not on facts withheld, and locked up in the executive cabinet. Had the public safety been at stake, or any great public good been presented to our view, but which would be lost by a moment's delay, there would have been some apology for dispatch, though none for acting without due information. In truth, the measure appeared to me then, as it still does, and as it appears to the public, without a sufficient motive, without a legitimate object. Hence the general inquiry—"For what is the embargo laid?" And I challenge any man, not in the secret of the executive, to tell. I know, Sir, that the president said the papers above-mentioned "shewed that great and increasing dangers threatened our vessels, our seamen, and our merchandize:" but I also know that they exhibited no new dan-



gers; none of which our merchants and seamen had not been well apprized. The British proclamation had many days before been published in the newspapers [the copy laid before us by the president had been cut out of a newspaper]; and so had the substance, if not the words of Regnier's letter. Yet they had excited little concern among merchants and seamen, the preservation of whose persons and property was the professed object of the president's recommendation of an embargo. The merchants and seamen could accurately estimate the dangers of continuing their commercial operations; of which dangers, indeed, the actual premiums of insurance were a satisfactory gauge. Those premiums had very little increased: by the British proclamation not a cent: and by the French decree so little as not to stop commercial enterprizes. The great number of vessels loading or loaded, and prepared for sea; the exertions every where made, on the first rumour of the embargo, to dispatch them, demonstrate the president's dangers to be imaginary, to have been assumed. Or if great and real dangers, unknown to commercial men, were impending, or sure to fall, how desirable was it to have had them officially declared and published. This would have produced a voluntary embargo, and prevented every complaint. Besides, the dangers clearly defined and understood, the public mind would not have been disquieted with imaginary fears, the more tormenting, because uncertain.—It is true that considerable numbers of vessels were collected in our ports, and many held in suspense; not, however, from any new dangers which appeared, but from the mysterious conduct of our affairs after the attack on the Chesapeake, and from the painful apprehensions that the course the president was pursuing would terminate in war. The *National Intelligencer*, usually considered as the executive newspaper, gave the alarm, and it was echoed through the U. States. War, probable or inevitable war, was the constant theme of the newspapers, and of the conversations, as was reported, of persons supposed to be informed of executive designs. Yet amid this din of war, no adequate preparations were seen making to meet it. The order to detach a hundred thousand militia to fight the British navy (for there was no appearance of an enemy in any other shape) was so completely absurd, as to excite, with men of common sense, no other emotion than ridicule. Not the shadow of a reason that could operate on the mind of a man of common understanding can be offered in its justification. The refusal of the British offi-

cer to receive the frigate *Chesapeake* as a prize, when tendered by her commander, is a demonstration that the attack upon her was exclusively for the purpose of taking their deserters, and not intended as the commencement of a war between the two nations. The president knew that the British had no invading army to land on our shores; and the detached militia would be useless, except against land forces. Why then was this order for the militia given? The nature of the case, and the actual state of things, authorize the inference, that its immediate, if not its only object, was to increase the public alarm, to aggravate the public resentment against G. Britain, to excite a war pulse; and in the height of this artificial fever of the public mind, which was to be made known in G. Britain, to renew the demands on her government, in the poor expectation of extorting, in that state of things, concessions of points which she had always considered as her rights, and which at all times, and under all circumstances, she had uniformly refused to relinquish. The result of the subsequent negotiation at London has shown how utterly unfounded was the president's expectation, how perfectly useless all this bluster of war. While no well-informed man doubted that the British government would make suitable reparation for the attack on the *Chesapeake*. The president himself, in his proclamation, had placed the affair on that footing. "A rupture between the two nations," said he, "is equally opposed to the interest of both, as it is to assurances of the most friendly dispositions on the part of the British government, in the midst of which this outrage was committed. In this light the subject cannot but present itself to that government, and strengthen the motives to an honourable reparation for the wrong which has been done." And it is now well known that such reparation might have been promptly obtained in London, had the president's instructions to Mr. Monroe been compatible with such an adjustment. He was required not to negotiate on this single transient act (which when once adjusted was for ever settled) but in connection with another claim of long standing, and, to say the least, of doubtful right; to wit, the exemption from impressment of British seamen found on board American merchant vessels. To remedy the evil arising from its exercise, by which our own citizens were sometimes impressed, the attention of our government, under every administration, had been earnestly engaged; but no practicable plan has yet been contrived; while no man who regards the truth, will question

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the disposition of the British government to adopt any arrangement that will secure to G. Britain the services of her own subjects. And now, when the unexampled situation of that country, left alone to maintain the conflict with France, and her numerous dependent states, left alone to withstand the power which menaces the liberties of the world, rendered the aid of all her subjects more than ever needful; there was no reasonable ground to expect that she would yield the right to take them when found on board the merchant vessels of any nation. Thus to insist on her yielding this point, and inseparably to connect it with the affair of the Chesapeake, was tantamount to a determination not to negotiate at all.—I write, Sir, with freedom; for the times are too perilous to allow those who are placed in high and responsible situations to be silent or reserved. The peace and safety of our country are suspended on a thread. The course we have seen pursued leads on to war—to war with G. Britain—a war absolutely without necessity—a war which, whether disastrous or successful, must bring misery and ruin to the U. States; misery by the destruction of our navigation and commerce (perhaps also of our fairest seaport towns and cities) the loss of markets for our produce, the want of foreign goods and manufactures, and the other evils incident to a state of war; and ruin, by the loss of our liberty and independence. For if, with the aid of our arms, G. Britain were subdued, from that moment, though flattered perhaps with the name of allies, we should become the provinces of France. This is a result so obvious, that I must crave your pardon for noticing it. Some advocates of executive measures admit it. They acknowledge that the navy of Britain is our shield against the overwhelming power of France. Why then do they persist in a course of conduct tending to a rupture with G. Britain?—Will it be believed that it is principally, or solely, to procure inviolability to the merchant flag of the U. States? In other words, to protect all seamen (British subjects, as well as our own citizens) on board our merchant vessels? It is a fact that this has been made the greatest obstacle to an amicable settlement with G. Britain. Yet, I repeat, it is perfectly well known that she desires to obtain only her own subjects; and that American citizens, impressed by mistake, are delivered up on duly authenticated proof. The evil we complain of arises from the impossibility of always distinguishing the persons of two nations who a few years since were one people, who exhibit the same manners, speak

the same language, and possess similar features. But seeing that we seldom hear complaints in the great navigating states, how happens there to be such extreme sympathy for American seamen at Washington? Especially in gentlemen from the interior states, which have no seamen, or from those Atlantic states whose native seamen bear a very small proportion to those of New England? In fact, the causes of complaint are much fewer than are pretended. They rarely occur in the States whose seamen are chiefly natives. The first merchant in the United States, in answering my late inquiry about British impressments, says, “since the Chesapeake affair we have had no complaint. I cannot find one single instance where they have taken one man out of a merchant vessel. I have had more than twenty vessels arrived in that time, without one instance of a man being taken by them. Three Swedes were taken out by a French frigate. I have made inquiry of all the masters that have arrived in this vicinity, and cannot find any complaints against the British cruizers.”—Can gentlemen of known hostility to foreign commerce in our own vessels—who are even willing to annihilate it (and such there are)—can these gentlemen plead the cause of our seamen, because they really wish to protect them? Can those desire to protect our seamen, who, by laying an unnecessary embargo, expose them by thousands to starve or beg?—One gentleman has said (and I believe he does not stand alone) that sooner than admit the principle that G. Britain had a right to take her own subjects from our merchant vessels, he would abandon commerce altogether! To what will every man in New-England and of the other navigating states, ascribe such a sentiment? A sentiment which, to prevent the temporary loss of 5 men by impress, would reduce fifty thousand to beggary? But for the embargo, thousands depending on the ordinary operations of commerce, would now be employed. Even under the restraints of the orders of the British government, retaliating the French imperial decree, very large portions of the world remain open to the commerce of the U. States. We may yet pursue our trade with the British dominions, in every part of the globe; with Africa, with China, and with the colonies of France, Spain, and Holland. And let me ask, whether, in the midst of a profound peace, when the powers of Europe possessing colonies, would, as formerly, confine the trade with them to their own bottoms, or admit us, as foreigners, only under great limitations, we could



enjoy a commerce, much more extensive, than is practicable at this moment, if the embargo were not in the way? Why then should it be continued? Why rather was it ever laid? Can those be legitimate reasons for the embargo which are concealed from Congress at the moment when they are required to impose it? Are the reasons to be found in the dispatches from Paris? These have been moved for; and the motion was quashed by the advocates for the embargo. Why are these dispatches withheld by the executive? Why, when all classes of citizens anxiously inquire "for what is the embargo laid?" is a satisfactory answer denied? Why is not congress made acquainted with the actual situation of the U. States in relation to France. Why, in this dangerous crisis, are Mr. Armstrong's letters to the secretary of state absolutely withheld, so that a line of them cannot be seen? Did they contain no information of the demands and intentions of the French Emperor? Did the *Revenge* sail from England to France, and there wait three or four weeks for dispatches of no importance? If so, why, regardless of the public solicitude, are their contents so carefully concealed? If really unimportant, what harm can arise from telling congress and the nation, officially, that they contain nothing of moment to the safety, the liberty, the honour, or the interests of the U. States? On the contrary, are they so closely locked up because they will not bear the light? Would their disclosure rouse the spirit of the people, still slumbering in blind confidence in the executive? Has the French Emperor declared that he will have no neutrals? Has he required that our ports, like those of his vassal states in Europe, be shut against British commerce? Is the embargo a substitute, a milder form of compliance with that harsh demand, which, if exhibited in its naked and insulting aspect, the American spirit might yet resent? Are we still to be kept profoundly ignorant of the declarations and avowed designs of the French Emperor, although these may strike at our liberty and independence? And in the mean time, are we, by a thousand irritations, by cherishing prejudices, and by exciting fresh resentments, to be drawn gradually into a war with G. Britain? Why, amidst the extreme anxiety of the public mind, is it still kept on the rack of fearful expectation, by the president's portentous silence respecting his

French dispatches? In this concealment there is danger. In this concealment must be wrapt up the real cause of the embargo. On any other supposition it is inexplicable. —I am alarmed, Sir, at this perilous state of things; I cannot repress my suspicions, or forbear thus to exhibit to you the grounds on which they rest. The people are advised to repose implicit confidence in the national government: in that unbounded confidence lies our danger. Armed with that confidence, the executive may procure the adoption of measures which may overwhelm us with ruin, as surely as if he had an army at his heels. By false policy, or by inordinate fears, our country may be betrayed and subjugated to France, as surely as by corruption.  
(*To be continued.*)

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